

Message Text

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SUBJ: U.S.-IRAQI CULTURAL RELATIONS

1. IN COURSE OF GENERAL/INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION SEPTEMBER 5 ON U.S.-IRAQI CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH MOHANNAD KASSIM KHALIL, DIRECTOR, CULTURAL AFFAIRS AT FONMIN, USINT POLITICAL OFFICER ASKED IF 1961 CULTURAL RELATIONS AGREEMENT BETWEEN U.S. AND IRAQ MIGHT BE CONSIDERED WORKING BASIS FOR DEVELOPING CULTURAL TIES BETWEEN U.S. AND IRAQ. KHALIL, THOROUGHLY CONVERSANT WITH ISSUES INVOLVED, REPLIED THAT IRAQ AGREES TREATY IS IN FORCE. KHALIL THEN TOUCHED ON REVIEW OF IRAQ'S INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL TIES NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION BY COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES OF FONMIN, MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY OF INFORMATION. WHILE BEMOANING UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL RELATIONS, KHALIL AMBIGUOUSLY REMARKED THAT "MINISTER HIMSELF" (PERHAPS MFA SAADOUN HAMMADI) WAS MAKING DECISION ON CULTURAL TIES, AND HE IMPLIED THAT INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS OF U.S.-IRAQI CULTURAL RELATIONS MIGHT REQUIRE MINISTER'S PERSONAL REVIEW. CHOOSING HIS WORDS CAREFULLY, KHALIL ENVISIONED THE DEVELOPMENT OF WARMER RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND OBSERVED THAT, WHILE THE U.S. AND IRAQ DID NOT HAVE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WERE, IN FACT, OFTEN INTERRELATED.

2. IN REPORTING OFFICER'S OPINION, KHALIL DISPLAYED THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF LIMITED U.S.-IRAQ CULTURAL RELATIONSHIP DURING EXTREMELY WARM INTERVIEW. ALMOST AS ON CUE, KHALIL SEIZED FIRST OPPORTUNITY (A) TO NOTE INTEREST IN FURTHER U.S.-
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IRAQI CULTURAL TIES AND (B) TO COMMENT ON THE INTERRELATION-

SHIP OF ALL CONTACTS BETWEEN NATIONS.

3. INDIVIDUAL ITEMS COVERED IN MEETING (E.G. AMERICAN MODERN ART EXHIBIT TO VISIT IRAQ, EXCHANGE OF PROFESSORS, ETC.) WILL BE REPORTED SEPARATELY.

4. COMMENT: RECENT GROUND-BREAKING USINT CONTACTS WITH MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, MINISTRY OF OIL AND NOW MFA ON MATTER OF CULTURAL EXCHANGES, WHEN ADDED TO OUR EARLIER ESTABLISHED POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL CONTACTS, DEMONSTRATES THAT GOI WILL ACCEPT OVERTURES FROM USG ON ANY POINT OF MUTUAL INTEREST. GOI HAS NOW REAFFIRMED TWO PRE-BAATH REGIME TREATIES: ON COMMERCE/FRIENDSHIP AND, INFORMALLY, ON "CULTURAL RELATIONS". THIS IS FAR CRY FROM LATE 1972 AND MUCH OF 1973 WHEN PIONEERING USINT OFFS USUALLY HAD TO CONTENT SELVES WITH LOW-LEVEL CONTACTS PROTOCOL SECTION.
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